



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 2, 2020

**CONTACT:**

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ESTABLISHING NEW GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE  
ADVISORY GROUP**

**CHICAGO, IL** — Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today kicked off the newly established Gender-Based Violence Advisory Group. Part of the City's overall violence reduction strategy, the group is tasked with coordinating responses across City agencies and departments to address gender-based violence (GBV) of all forms – domestic violence, sexual violence and human trafficking. Representatives from the Department of Family & Social Service (DFSS), the Department of Public Health (CDPH), the Department of Housing (DOH), the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD), the Commission on Human Relations (CCHR), Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and City Colleges of Chicago (CCC), as well as the many organizations on the frontlines of addressing gender-based violence in communities, will advise Mayor Lightfoot and senior officials on building the necessary infrastructure to develop new policies, support critical services to survivors, and improve coordination amongst partners.

"Gender-based violence is a growing challenge in our city that does not receive the attention it needs to be completely eradicated," said Mayor Lightfoot. "Thanks to this advisory group, we will be able to address the underlying causes of this challenge, work together to create an ecosystem that works for survivors and push Chicago further towards becoming the safest big city in the country. I look forward to working with the group to create and support policy that dismantles the systemic inequities driving gender-based violence once and for all."

In 2020, the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline, which receives funding from the Chicago Department of Family & Support Services, received 28,749 calls (a 17% increase over 2019), 936 text messages and 56 online chats from survivors and supporters seeking safety. Of those, 11,161 calls, 592 texts and 42 online chats were from survivors and supporters in the City of Chicago.

"By increasing our capacity to offer safe and trusted services for residents affected by violence, Chicago moves toward the goal of preventing anyone from experiencing tragedy at the hands of another individual," said DFSS Commissioner Lisa Morrison



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



Butler. “The more opportunities made available for residents to address violence, the more families and communities we can empower and equip with resources to thrive.”

This work builds on the project funded by the federal Office of Violence Against Women (OVW) to improve the Chicago Police Department’s response to gender-based violence. The advisory group will look at other systems, beyond policing, in the Chicago ecosystem to ensure survivors are met with trauma-informed and culturally-sensitive support regardless of where they engage with City departments or agencies. These might include housing, mental health services, education, legal services and workforce development.

Additionally, the City’s 2021 budget includes an increased investment of \$2.5 million toward domestic violence services, including support for people who cause harm.

“The Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence looks forward to working with partners from across the city as Mayor Lightfoot leads the effort to address gender-based violence as a public health crisis, said Amanda Pyron, Executive Director of The Network and member of the new Advisory Group. “This effort will complement the City’s ongoing efforts to reduce gun violence by addressing a key root cause: domestic violence. On behalf of the children and families of Chicago, we thank the City for beginning this critical work.”

Gender-based violence occurs in homes, on the streets, in workplaces and in intended safe places such as schools, medical facilities and places of faith. Cis gender women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, young people, people of color and immigrants in every economic bracket are all impacted by GBV. According to the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN), a person is sexually assaulted every 73 seconds in the United States. In 2019, CPD received over 190,000 calls related to domestic incidents. Food service and hospitality workers report some of the highest levels of sexual harassment.

“Mayor Lightfoot’s Gender-Based Violence Advisory Group is an important, preliminary step in the city’s reevaluation of how sexual, intimate partner, and domestic violence are addressed,” said Dr. Paige Baker-Braxton, Program Director at Howard Brown Health. “Howard Brown Health is actively participating in the Advisory Group with the primary goal of elevating the voices of LGBTQ community members impacted by violence and centering the needs of queer and trans people in recommendations about policy and budgetary processes. We look forward to collaborating with agencies and departments across the city to improve prevention and service provision for *all survivors*.”



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



###